14 Sept 71

Harold —

I write this by hand because I am away from my desk and need to write quietly. Freshmen are in town and I have to sit here waiting for them to come by with questions about this year's courses. I shall have to interrupt this letter from time to time, so my thoughts may jump about.

I have been slowly reading Howard's book, which contains many very good things — slowly because I have been busy during the past few weeks preparing lectures and fixing up my house. (On the house, I have started on the basement, major construction work all around. I'm stripping everything back to the bare walls and rebuilding from scratch. When young I did some house construction, so I have some experience. I am getting great enjoyment and satisfaction from it, although the work is hard — I'm getting no help — and the cost steep.)

My comments to Howard deal largely with matters of grammar, punctuation, and small points of style, since I don't want to impinge greatly on his presentation of the material or on the form of his arguments. He probably finds my comments annoying, since they are numerous and concern mainly small things, but he knows that he will not offend me if he fails to use them.

I came up with nothing new on the "Threat" matter. I read most of John Donne and found nothing significant. Even checked a concordance of Donne for clues, but got no help.

I also read Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense, which is a collection of limericks. The Constable from Barstable made me think that the reference may be in a limerick. Perhaps it is, but not in any of Lear's. I have not seen any other collections of limericks, but will watch out.

Howard sent me the file on the "Threat" and wants it returned. I still have it, since some of the things are so unclear that I cannot copy them. I'll hold it for a while longer.

On Peter, the New Testament (Matt. 16.18) uses a double entendre in the statement, "upon this rock I will build my church." The word Peter in Greek is Petros (rock, stone). Peter's real name was Simon Bar-jona, but Jesus renamed him Petra: "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter (Petros), and upon this rock (petra, the feminine form of petros) I will build my church.

On the "Threat" generally, I think it worthwhile to gather all clues and interpretations, but not to bother greatly about them — especially if fussing with the "threat" cuts deeply into time better spent on other things. If there is some coherent meaning in the thing, I think that it will not be known except in retrospect of the event to which it relates. The note may then be of paramount importance, and its meaning might then be clear, but until something happens, all one can do is come forth with aimless meanderings of thoughts, most of which probably are irrelevant.

Things are getting busy for me now, and I must stop. I'll write again soon.

Still,

Dick